

**Metropolitan Transportation Commission  
Community Focus Group: Community Development Institute  
Held at the Ravenswood Family Health Clinic  
East Palo Alto, California  
June 4, 2008**

Before we started, one woman mentioned how dangerous it is to ride her bike on the 101 overpass over University Avenue.

**Question 1**

1. Which of the following strategies should be a higher priority?	
A. Spending transportation funds to maintain the existing system of roads and the existing bus, rail and ferry services in the region	4
B. Spending transportation funds to build new roads and add more bus, rail and ferry services in the region	9

**A:** spend more time on the stuff already built – if you build more, it will get too crowded

Since we already have it here, why not spend money to have it right – would have for new roads and people suffering from potholes for years stuck with those streets (wishes we could do both, but if he has to choose he would go for A)

It would cost more money to build new roads – spend the money to have more public transportation and reliable service – it would help a lot of people – need more buses

**B:** It's like trying to keep an old car running to choose A – you'll spend more money on the old product – spend money on the new thing and it will work well/better

It's time for a change – in East Palo Alto (EPA) there is Cooley Landing and a planning commissioner is trying to develop boats on the Bay/ferries – this would help EPA, Menlo Park and Palo Alto residents to travel across the Bay; also you would incorporate more individuals and a new scheme of things, as opposed to setting up the bus line that runs just down Bay Road instead of coming over to other areas; new emissions standards, new vehicles – need new things

Agree – gas is high – need more and newer buses, newer routes – need to improve the systems and have more transit

There are bad spending habits throughout the state (mentioned Pete Wilson and the state lottery – he didn't add lottery funds on for education) – he sees the same things locally – either you're going to really add to a budget, but not just subsidize spending – bad spending habits by government is a problem

I would like to advocate for bicycles – Palo Alto is one of the more bike friendly cities in the Bay Area; they have plenty of bike lanes, but EPA has never addressed that and our people need to ride bikes; it can be very dangerous crossing 101 on a bike; need proper bike lanes in this community (in EPA)

**Question 2**

2. How much of the \$30 billion dollar budget should be spent on maintaining local streets and roads, state highways, and public transit systems?	
A. Up to 25% (\$7.5 billion)	4
B. Up to 50% (\$15 billion)	3

C. Up to 75% (\$22.5 billion)	3
D. 100% (\$30 billion)	2

General comment: We do not maintain our streets on a regular basis – we go years and years without maintenance and then have to rob Peter to pay Paul – if we do it every two years, we wouldn't be in this situation; doesn't think it makes a difference how much, just need to do it more consistently (mentioned really deep potholes)

**A:** It's a small city here; they re-do the street while they're building homes; otherwise they don't fix the street; thinks 25% of the money needs to go to fix streets

**B:** Thinks half of it should be spent – need to keep up maintenance – but there are other new things that need to be provided

**C:** Thinks this would be enough to at least start to maintain things

**D:** Most of the roads and other things are all outdated; if they spent half, where would the rest of the money go?

### **Question 3**

3. If you didn't spend all \$30 billion dollars on maintenance projects, where would you spend the rest of the funds?
---

Would spend it on a free bus, train and bike program (for residents)

Would develop other alternatives in terms of transportation; ferries; more buses that can transport more than four bikes; would also advocate for seniors and children under 12 riding free

It's expensive to build new roads – need to build new roads for new buses (and for bikes new bike lanes)

(One gentleman mentioned someone else had an idea about cutting up rubber and using it for the roads)

Use the funds to help the bridge tolls stay at the same rate (stop raising the bridge tolls)

### **Question 4**

4. Which of the following projects should be a higher investment priority for the region's transportation system?	
A. Spending transportation funds on the highway system to relieve traffic congestion, including ramp metering, high-occupancy toll lanes, etc.	1
B. Spending transportation funds on public transit options, including rail and buses to provide alternatives to driving	6
C. Spending transportation funds on walking paths and bicycle lanes to provide alternatives to driving	6

**A:** More people are more likely to be on the freeway – would help more people spending funds on making traffic flow better

**B:** The rate at which the population is increasing and drivers are getting on the road – you can only build so many roads – we forget about the maintenance costs, too – next year the

discretionary spending will decrease – we should focus on having less people driving, not trying to build and build more; try and get people off the roads by giving them alternatives

**C:** I said C for all of the same reasons he said B – it doesn't bother me that gas prices are going up, because I ride my bike; some of my friends in Oakland who don't own cars, don't buy cars, but there are car sharing companies that help out when they really do need a car (like to pick up someone at the airport); we don't all have to own cars; car sharing is a private venture right now, but we should think about it as a public thing to do.

I see a lot of bike commuters going to the Dumbarton Bridge – if there was better access to arterials (like the Dumbarton), people would take more of them

Sometimes riding a bike at that level is like driving a car, so we really need more bike lanes to make it safer and easier for people to ride bikes

### **Question 5**

5. What's the one improvement that could be made to public transportation that would increase ridership?
--

Metal detectors, security, consistent pick up and drop off times, and more buses and free shuttles

Admire a place like Europe where they're going to provide public assistance; we should be talking about how the \$190 billion is spent; there are so many other things that need funds

Need to have more space for more bicycles on the public transit systems; we need buses to allow at least 10 to a dozen individuals to get on the bus with their bikes; I should be able to ride my bike to San Francisco; developing routes in the communities is more beneficial to residents – routes that go closer to houses and to the schools (this is that same thought about buses that go where people want to go)

Public transit vs. cars – I think what you pay for the train to get to SF and back – I don't know which is cheaper: to drive my car or ride the train – they should think of something to make it worth riding

Have you looked at other cities where public transit is successful (mentioned New York subway)?

Public service announcements to improve transit image – most people think that you're going to be riding with stinky, ugly people

I go to College of San Mateo – they'll send a big bus to pick me up (paratransit) but it won't pick up the person next to me because he's not on the manifest

We need different buses for different situations; we need environmentally clean buses; also, if you really know the transit system, it can really be a fun way to travel to take your bike and propel yourself on your own steam

### **Question 6**

6. Which of the following should be a higher priority?	
A. Providing more transportation funds to communities that are planning to build more housing along BART and other public transit lines	5
B. Providing transportation funds evenly to communities regardless of where they are planning to build homes	8

**A:** I like the BART and would like to live closer to the BART; it's faster; to get anywhere on other transit systems you have to take three buses; don't have to waste gas, can just park car get on BART and go where you need to go

**B:** It depends where you live; in EPA every time you go to the other side (Palo Alto) there's no potholes; you come on this side, you can see the difference; if they split the money, EPA can use the funding to repair their own rather than depending on building homes around transit

I choose B for creating homes, but it should also include jobs; companies should be building their offices around there; this pushes for housing rather than commercial uses; this guides the city planning to a specific direction, to focus on housing rather than commercial or businesses or industrial (if there was money there, they would chase that money then)

The key word is evenly; small cities like EPA need to have a little piece of this pie to meet our needs and have improvements

Agree it should be even so those cities that really need funds could have it too

General comment: On my street, there's no sidewalk; they keep repairing, and it doesn't make any difference

#### **Question 7**

7. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: <i>"There should be a subsidy for low-income riders."</i>	
A. Strongly Agree	10
B. Agree	3
C. Neutral	0
D. Disagree	0
E. Strongly Disagree	0

#### **Strongly Agree/Agree**

- I've often seen whether it's freezing, raining or hot, women walking around with their kids; there are pit bulls roaming and it's dangerous; is this woman walking because she wants to or because she has to; everybody needs to be able to get on the bus
- There are some people who can't afford it, but need to get to work and need to get to school; sometimes their families can't put money towards transit, but need to get to places
- No one stated they were neutral
- No one stated they strongly disagree or disagree

#### **Question 8**

8. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: <i>"I favor basing all transit fare subsidies on income rather than age or disability."</i>	
A. Strongly Agree	6
B. Agree	2
C. Neutral	1
D. Disagree	0
E. Strongly Disagree	4

**Strongly Agree/Agree**

- If you're wealthy and a senior citizen, you can pay, and you probably won't be taking the bus anyway; if you come from a wealthy family and are young, then your family can afford to pay (and they would probably buy you a car anyway)
- It covers every person as a whole; if they have low-income provision in housing, they should also have it in transportation

**Neutral**

- Because of how transportation money is collected in this county; your taxes already go towards transportation, so just because you have money, you're paying into the system – it's a double negative to make those people pay more than others

**Strongly Disagree/Disagree**

- Income is one thing, but age and disability is another; seniors shouldn't be penalized because they're old; people shouldn't be penalized because they have a disability – strongly disagree; why would you pit these against each other?; need to incorporate them all – low-income, age and disability

**Question 9**

9. Which of the following should be a higher priority?	
A. Reducing tailpipe emissions and encouraging alternatives to driving, such as public transit, bicycling, walking, etc.	10
B. Reducing traffic congestion and improving traffic flow to make it easier to drive around the Bay Area	3

**A:** Need to get the laziness out of us; we need to walk more

If you do A, you also take care of B (having alternatives to driving also takes care of congestion)

Improving traffic flow would encourage more people to drive and it would just be temporary – you'd still have a traffic problem

**B:** An idling car gets bad emissions; when you're flowing better, you get better emissions (I work on cars); need to improve traffic flow to help with emissions (it creates more bad emissions for EPA when cars are sitting at 101) – mentioned adding one more lane to each side of the freeway

Disagree with signal timing – backs up the traffic every morning – shouldn't sell European cars here (well, maybe Toyota)

**Question 10**

10. Which programs do you think are most effective to reduce the amount of emissions? (Select as many as you think will reduce emissions.)	
A. Subsidize purchase of newer/cleaner vehicles	8
B. Provide more/cheaper public transit	11
C. Develop awareness campaign to encourage people to reduce fossil fuel use	9
D. Build more bike paths and sidewalks	11
E. Funding incentives to cities to allow more development near transit	3

F. Support local traffic signal timing coordination	1
---	---

Mentioned vehicle retirement program – wanted to know if we still have it, and is it here, locally

Picked them all except E and F; I really want to live next to the BART station, right (he was being sarcastic); also has concern about signal timing (he's complained about the signal timing issues in EPA); regional awareness programs are out there, but a lot of people don't listen – we need better campaigns; EPA could really benefit from more sidewalks and bike paths (our roads aren't wide enough) – would encourage people to ride bikes more

Increase the incentive for getting rid of old cars (increase the state vehicle retirement program fees to \$1,000, for example)

**B C D** – Because transit is more economical for those who don't have cars; also a lot of kids have bikes and it will be easier and better for us to get to school

**C and D** – And should subsidize kids with proper bicycle clothing like helmets, brightly lit clothing at night

The group discussed laws about reflectors and helmets for bike riders

**A** – American cars are the cleanest in terms of emissions

### **Question 11**

11. How much of the \$30 billion dollar budget should be spent on maintaining local streets and roads, state highways, and public transit systems?	
A. Up to 25% (\$7.5 billion)	4
B. Up to 50% (\$15 billion)	2
C. Up to 75% (\$22.5 billion)	4
D. 100% (\$30 billion)	2

- I don't think it's a question of more or less money, but of consistency; once again, they should spend money consistently every year on maintenance; if they choose to use money for improvements, that's the flip of the coin; if they don't, it will compound the damage and make it more expensive to fix when it breaks down – but he would choose the entire amount – he did change his answer
- Preventive maintenance is the key
- I changed to a higher amount (three people actually changed to a higher amount)
- Two people changed to a lower amount
- Should have a special bus lane – we've got to start thinking differently

### **Question 12**

12. Thinking ahead to the year 2035, if you had \$30 billion, how much would you spend on each of the following projects to prepare for our regional transportation needs? To make it simpler, let's change the \$30 billion to \$30. Out of the \$30, please fill in the dollar amount you would spend for each area.	
A. Maintenance of existing roads and systems	\$96
B. Relief of traffic congestion	\$64
C. Provide transportation funds to cities that develop housing near transit	\$50

D. Provide access to public transit systems for all Bay Area residents	\$109
E. Reducing automobile emissions	\$71

### **Question 13**

13. Now that we've done the budget, would you favor pursuing new revenues to increase the funding?	
A. Yes	3
B. No	10

**A:** I don't think we should get more funding; I think we should cut what we are spending money on; the money is not spent wisely and there will never be enough

I also said no; it's not about more money, it's about thorough planning and stop robbing Peter to pay Paul; if we have money allocated for the next 25 years for improvements/maintenance, we need to use that money for the purpose it's for (and not steal it for other state budget issues)

**B:** In this region, we need to attract more people to this region (the Silicon Valley), that's how we economically survive and are number six in the state; you will be complaining later on about streets – the percentage will grow and grow – a lot of pipes under roads need to be replaced

### **Question 14**

14. Which of the following new revenue sources would you support? (Multiple answers are okay.)	
A. Regional gas fee	2
B. Higher bridge toll	1
C. Road tolls	1
D. Vehicle registration fees	1
E. County transportation sales taxes	1
F. Other new revenues	3
G. No new fees or increases	8

G – it's self-explanatory

F and G – addition by subtraction – efficiency – if the money is used right, you'll have more money left

E and F – we're going to have to do another sales tax in 20 years; we have got to try harder to get federal funding

Said no to Q13, so I'm not responding to Q14 – instead of investing in the people in the Bay Area and instead of investing in the roads we have, we want to throw more money at the problem and bring in new people and add more money to roads; this is not fixing the problem – it's just taxing people to add to the problem

The problem in Sacramento is not a revenue problem; it's a spending problem  
I wouldn't mind paying through vehicle registration (more than gas or road tolls)